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What is an examen prayer?

Question: "What is an examen prayer?"

Answer: The examen prayer, or the daily examen, was developed by Roman Catholic Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the [Jesuits](#). Examen prayer is a technique of prayer and meditation for sensing God's presence and guidance in daily life. A Spanish soldier from his youth, Ignatius pursued personal pleasure and military glory until age 30, when he was severely wounded in battle. During his long and painful recovery, he read Christian literature, leading him to renounce his old way of life and devote himself entirely to serving God.

Ignatius spent much time during his convalescence in meditation and prayer. Convinced that any Christian could benefit from prayer as he had, Ignatius published his methods in 1548 in the *Spiritual Exercises*, a simple set of meditations, prayers, and other mental exercises designed to be completed in 28 to 30 days. The daily examen is from that work.

Ignatius felt prayer was more effective when approached in a fluid rather than mechanical way, more of a conversation with Jesus as a friend. Practitioners of examen prayer are given suggested "points" or "movements" when "praying the examen." These points are as follows:

Movement 1: Thanksgiving

Movement 2: Guidance

Movement 3: Review

Movement 4: Grace

Movement 5: Resolution

While those who pray the examen may find it beneficial for their spiritual and daily lives, it is in no way equal to God's Word. Methods of practicing the examen are numerous and vary greatly. Some Christians find a specific method of prayer a helpful discipline, while others prefer to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" ([Ephesians 6:18](#)).

Scripture is suggested for examen prayers, but so is a heavy dose of "imagination," which can be a slippery slope away from truth when not grounded in God's Word. "Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn" ([Isaiah 8:20](#)). And, while the life and devotion of Ignatius are truly remarkable, his vows—still taken by all Jesuits—include "absolute obedience to the Pope," a position in defiance of Scripture, which never grants any human being sole authority over the church ([Luke 4:8](#); [1 Corinthians 1:11-17](#); [3:4-5](#)).

Despite the [Catholic](#) origin of the examen method of prayer, Bible-believing Christians may find it useful in the life of faith, as long as they keep it grounded in God's Word ([Joshua 1:8](#); [Psalm 1:2](#)).

Recommended Resource: [The Prayer That Turns the World Upside Down: The Lord's Prayer as a Manifesto for Revolution by R. Albert Mohler Jr.](#)

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